

Indian-head pennies make much cents

By Roger Boye

This week's column answers questions about coins and currency.

Q—Are Indian-head "pennies" from the early 1900s worth much? Our coins were made in 1905 and 1907.

K.L., Hammond, Ind.

A—They would retail for about 70 cents each if in "good condition." The Indian heads that sell for more than \$1 are dated 1886 or earlier, 1894, and the 1908 or 1909 specimens bearing "S" [for San Francisco] mint marks.

The rarest Indian-head cent—the 1877—goes for about \$225 in "good condition." Uncle Sam made just 852,500 such coins, a fraction of the 80.7 million Indian heads produced in 1905 or the 108.1 million in 1907.

Q—The serial number on my \$1 bill [79300397] reads the same backwards and forwards. Is that special?

R.E., Highland Park

A—Yes. A Chicago dealer charges \$4.75 each for uncirculated \$1 bills with similar so-called "radar digits." The dealer estimates that such numbering quirks occur once in every 10,000 Federal Reserve notes printed.

Q—We own a beautiful medal engraved "gold filled," which we assume is pure gold. How much would the metal cost?

P.O., Chicago

A—Probably less than \$2. Your medal likely is made out of a cheap alloy such as brass covered with an extremely thin layer of gold. "Gold filled" normally means the same as "gold plated."

Q—During the past four years I've saved 43 quarters dated 1776-1976. How much could I get for these rarities?

T.O., Chicago

A—Just 25 cents each. Uncle Sam minted 1.7 billion such coins for circulation to commemorate the Bicentennial in 1976. Specimens showing even the slightest wear from use have no special premium on the hobby market.

● Questions about coins and currency? Send your queries to Roger Boye, Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.